

The Badge



Georgia Department of Public Safety Quarterly Newsletter

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SPRING 2010

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A Message from the Commissioner



Colonel Bill Hitchens

The Georgia General Assembly recently adjourned and bid Atlanta a joyful farewell until it reconvenes in January 2011. This year's session was the longest in the history of the state of Georgia and was consumed by budget issues. Unfortunately, there is unanimity among members of the legislature, the staffers who work there, and those who closely follow what transpires there, that without anything short of some form of an unforeseen economic miracle, next year's budget will be much more difficult. The federal stimulus funds will have been expended and the emergency fund is essentially gone, so there could be a \$2 billion to \$3 billion shortfall in what is received in state revenue as opposed to what state expenditures currently require.

As we began this year's budget process, those of us who interact with the legislative budget committees were very wary of our plight. With all of the budget reductions we had already experienced, it appeared that all we had left was personnel. Two years ago our annual appropriated budget (state funds) was \$118 million. This year's was \$85 million. When 82% of the \$118 million went for personnel services (salaries) and 10% went for cars and fuel, one doesn't have to have an accounting degree to realize we have had to change how we do business. Fortunately, we have some people on staff that identified some innovative opportunities and ideas that have either provided significant monetary

savings or transferred some costs to other funding sources.

The good news is that as of July 1, 2010, based on the budget as it was passed, furloughs will cease. However, I feel obligated to tell everyone that there were no furloughs included in last year's budget. As state revenues decreased, we were required to make across the board cuts, which finally got to the point where we had to furlough employees. While my hope is that we will not have to utilize furloughs again, the April Revenue Report was released and revenues were down \$58,505,000 or 4.2% from last April.

The other cuts we took in the FY 2011 were \$70,000 for a captain's position in the State Patrol and \$219,000 in administration. Headquarters staffing is the primary expense in the administration project area and we believe we can deal with the reduction through normal attrition and filling only those positions deemed to be critical. An additional cut of \$225,325 was proposed for MCCC, but we were able to have those funds restored during the last week of the session.

On the positive side, we believe we will get some funding for vehicles that we did not believe would be forthcoming. For the first time that I am aware, the state will be selling bonds to pay for the cars. Naturally, the bonds have to be sold before we will receive any money. I believe that process is to begin in September, which means it will be mid-year at best before we can place an order. The bond total will be \$2,378,000, which should buy around 116 to 118 cars.

Comparatively speaking, the Department of Public Safety came away from this year's legislative session relatively unscathed. But I am thoroughly convinced that we still have some difficult times ahead of us and to believe otherwise is foolhardy. For the most part, members of the General Assembly continue to speak highly of our agency and are acutely aware that we continue to do more with less.

Our history is replete with periods that required our personnel to rise to the occasion, and all of you have acquitted yourselves well during this time of economic crisis. During the last couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to review comparative statistical data from 2007 through 2009. Certainly we are down in some areas due to the budget cuts that resulted in personnel and fuel reductions. But in critical areas, we improved or at least kept the status quo. In the State Patrol, more crash investigations were conducted in 2009 than in any year in our history and there was a 10.6% increase over 2007. Seatbelt citations were up 10.6%; child restraint citations were up 53.5%; and most importantly, DUI arrests were up 22.2%. The statewide fatality count was down significantly. Unfortunately, in the Motor Carrier Compliance Division, the statistics for truck weighing continue to be reduced, but the causal factor is pretty obvious. Personnel reductions have limited us from being able to staff the weigh stations only 33% of the time, which I brought to the attention of the Joint Appropriations Committee when I briefed them on DPS budget issues at the onset of the legislative session. While several questions were posed to me afterward, we did not receive any additional funding. We plan to detach some personnel to the weigh stations to enhance the operational tempo and record the statistical data (trucks weighed, violations detected and increased revenues). Therefore, next year we will be better able to document what an increase in MCCC personnel would accomplish.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the DPS personnel involved with legislative liaison activities this year. They were responsible for getting our legislation passed and in securing sufficient monies to operate for another year. Although I most certainly will leave someone out, foremost among them were Major Mark McDonough, Chief Mark McLeod, Joe Hood and Jacqueline Bunn. Well done!

The Badge is published quarterly by the Public Information Office of the Georgia Department of Public Safety as an information service for Department members and retirees.

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Commissioner

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House Resolution 1911 Recognizes Colonel for Years of Service



Colonel Hitchens was recognized by the Georgia House of Representatives for his impressive career spanning more than 45 years of public safety service. His service includes four years in the Marine Corps, a 13-month stint in Vietnam, 28 years on the Georgia State Patrol, and more than five years as the executive head of the Georgia Department of Public Safety.

The resolution also stated that he, "is highly regarded for his integrity, dedication, and expertise, not only by the citizens and law enforcement officers, but also by prominent national and international public safety leaders around the world."

The members of the House of Representatives expressed their gratitude for his many contributions to Georgia and national security at the State Capitol on April 21.

Troop C's Lt. Mark Hambert Recognized for Valor

Troop C Lt. Mark Hambert was one of 11 public safety professionals who received recognition during the Governor's Public Safety Awards ceremony at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth. Lt. Hambert was recognized for his efforts to rescue two people at the scene of a traffic crash. His citation reads: "On October 10, 2008, at approximately 8:00 a.m., Lt. Mark Hambert was traveling on Interstate 75 in Bartow County when he saw a vehicle that had left the roadway, overturned, and was on fire.

Lt. Hambert quickly responded to the crash and tried to extinguish the fire. Unable to do so, Lt. Hambert turned his efforts to rescuing the driver who was semi-conscious and still secured by the seatbelt. Lt. Hambert cut the seatbelt and pulled him from the vehicle. The victim then regained consciousness and stated his child was in the vehicle. Lt. Hambert returned to the burning vehicle to try to gain access to the child. He attempted to rescue the child through the sunroof that had popped out during the crash. He was unable to reach the child and only after the heat and flames were unbearable did Lt. Hambert give up rescue efforts.

The driver of the vehicle was initially treated at the scene and then transported by helicopter to the hospital where he later died. Lt. Hambert went above and beyond the call of duty and put himself in great danger to try to save the victims from this tragedy." Governor Sonny Perdue was the keynote speaker and told the group, "I am proud to honor the heroic acts of Georgia's courageous public safety servants."



Troop B's Post 7 Commended for Impaired Driving Enforcement Efforts



Members of the Georgia House and Senate recognized the members of Post 7, Toccoa with a resolution recognizing them for their DUI enforcement efforts. The resolution commended the post personnel for their "dedication to keeping the streets of Georgia safe and free from impaired drivers" and also "the care, fortitude, and selfless dedication exhibited by the officers."

The resolution continued to note their achievements that include the 2008 Mothers Against Drunk Driving Hero Award and the 2008 Post of the Year Award. In 2009, the post increased their DUI enforcement by an additional five percent, making 464 DUI arrests.

87th Georgia State Patrol Trooper School Graduates



Patrol. "These troopers have received the best training available in the country," Colonel Hitchens said. "They have undergone grueling physical, textbook, and field training to prepare them well for a career in the dangerous profession of law enforcement."

The new troopers have also completed 12 weeks of field training supervised under the guidance of seasoned troopers. The graduates of the 87th Trooper School were assigned to vacancies at the State Patrol's 48 patrol posts across the state.

The new troopers reported to their assigned posts and began patrols on March 1.

Congratulations to the 31 members of the 87th Georgia State Patrol Trooper School. Governor Sonny Perdue was the keynote speaker for graduation exercises at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, February 19.

The new troopers completed a 33-week training school that included specialized training in impaired driving enforcement, pursuit driving, firearms, drug interdiction techniques, as well as extensive training in traffic crash investigations and self-defense. Colonel Bill Hitchens, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety, said the 31 troopers have earned the right to wear the traditional "big hat" of the Georgia State



GSP Motorcycle Unit Celebrates Opening of New Post



A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the GSP Motorcycle Unit was held on April 28. Governor Perdue, Lt. Governor Cagle, Colonel Hitchens, Lt. Colonel Snellings, Major McDonough, DPS Command staff, Troop C Command, Troop C personnel, along with personnel from headquarters, were in attendance. The new location provides more office space, as well as a garage area for repairs. The location also provides easy access to the interstate system in the Atlanta area, I-285, I-20, I-75, and I-85, for unit members to respond to incidents in a timely manner.

The primary purpose of the Motorcycle Unit is to target the "Fatal Five" violations: speeding, seatbelt violators, improper lane change, following too close and driving under the influence.



G-TACT Taking Safety Message To Drivers



The Georgia Targeting Aggressive Cars and Trucks Program (G-TACT) conducted enforcement waves along interstates in Bulloch, Coweta, Chatham, and Troup counties during January, February, and March. The enforcement waves coincided with educational outreach to take the message of “Leave More Space” to motorists.

The Georgia TACT Program is an enforcement and education program by the Georgia Department of Public Safety with funding from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The program targets high-risk crash corridors in an effort to reduce injuries and fatalities from unsafe driving behaviors by passenger vehicles and commercial motor vehicles. Outreach methods include billboards, radio and newspaper ads, highway signs, media events, fully-wrapped semi-trucks, and display booths at welcome centers, as well as each NASCAR race at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

MCCD Region 7 conducted six, three-day enforcement waves along I-16 and I-95 in Chatham and Bulloch counties during the first three months of the year with 3,071 total contacts. State, county and municipal law enforcement officers issued 504 citations and conducted 1,113 safety inspections of commercial vehicles. The inspections resulted in 68 drivers and 203 vehicles being placed out of service.

During the same three-month period, law enforcement officers in Coweta and Troup counties were conducting a G-TACT wave along I-85 and I-185. There were 1,751 total contacts with 592 citations issued to car and truck drivers. The 636 safety inspections resulted in 97 vehicles and 38 drivers being placed out of service.



Capitol Police Wraps Up the Longest Legislative Session

The 2010 Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly convened in January and adjourned in April and remained a relatively quiet session with little impact on activities of the Capitol Police Division. However, this Legislative Session set a new record as the longest in Georgia history.

While the 2010 Legislative Session led many citizens and political action groups to the Capitol to voice their concerns and bring political awareness to a wide variety of social and economic concerns, there remained only a few requests for the assembly of large gatherings on the grounds of the Capitol.

The Georgia Right to Life organization was the first large crowd to assemble on the Capitol grounds to support the anti-abortion movement. This annual event is typically a large group that often is met with pro-life groups that demonstrate against their views. This year the pro-life activist group met several days later to voice their opposition to the right to life supporters.

On February 3, the Conservative Coalition assembled on the Capitol grounds. Later that month on February 27, the Atlanta Tea Party Patriots gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the Tea Party. Americans for Prosperity also convened in opposition of no new taxes. The final demonstration was held on April 15, with approximately 5,000 Tea Party supporters rallying around the Capitol and the surrounding areas of Capitol Hill.

With budget cuts, especially in the area of education, a large number of educators, citizens, and political action groups requested permits to address their concerns and their opposition toward these cuts.



Excellence in Customer Service

Knowledgeable: “The Right Answer, The First Time.”

Providing customers with useful and accurate information is a critical part of providing exceptional service. For the members of the Department of Public Safety, it is particularly significant. Providing the right answer the first time is the foundation for fulfilling two of our core values: Trust and Professionalism. When a customer approaches a Trooper or Officer in the field, or calls into our offices, they expect that we know the answer. We understand that we are held to a higher standard.

Feedback from our customers over the past few years confirms that our members are meeting and exceeding those high expectations. This year, our average score is 9.1 on the comment card question of “The personnel assisting me today were knowledgeable” (1= poor, 10= excellent). This is consistent with the feedback we received in two past surveys completed by Georgia State University on crash investigations and commercial vehicle inspections. We averaged scores from 8.3 to 9.2 on all the items related to how knowledgeable they perceived our members to be.

In addition, during the past two quarters, the Georgia Department of Public Safety has been one of the top winners at the quarterly Governor’s Commendation for Excellence in Customer Service awards program.

The fast pace of change in today’s world makes it more and more challenging to maintain the knowledge needed to meet our customers’ expectations. Our outstanding results prove that our members are committed to meeting this challenge by continuously learning and growing our skills so that we can continue to live our values and meet the high standards that are expected of us. Thank you for your continuing commitment to our values and to providing exceptional service.

SFC Clay Kicklighter (Post 16, Helena) Assists Homeless Man by Providing Food and Transportation



TFC Carl Hutchinson (Post 45, Statesboro) Provides Assistance to Family Stranded on Hwy. I-16



HR Benefits & Transactions Team Provides Detail Oriented & Critical Service



Garage Members Save DPS Approximately \$18,000 with Installation of Security Plates



Excellence in Customer Service

Lieutenants Hitchens and Brewer (Troop F) Resolve Operational Matters that Resulted in Keeping Troopers on the Road and Saving Fuel



MCCD Permit Issuance Team Issued 51,132 Amber, Red, and Blue Light Permits and Assisted Applicants with Deadlines



Gordy Wright and Franka Young (PIO) Work on Multi-Agency Super Speeder Implementation Committee to Inform Drivers of the New Law



Senior Trooper James W. Andrews (Post 32, Athens) Assists Stranded Motorists During Winter Storm



MCO III Bobby L. Brewer of MCCD Goes Above and Beyond the Call of Duty to Educate Drivers on Traffic Safety



Headlines Across Georgia

Cartersville Breaks Ground for New Georgia State Patrol Post



Members of Post 23 Celebrate Opening of New Post in Brunswick



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Opening of Post 25's New Post in Grovetown



Post 46 Opens the Doors to its New Post Located in Monroe



GSP Softball Team Finishes Second in the "Battle of the Border" Softball Tournament



Troop C Heads Multi-Agency Enforcement Effort in Clayton County

